

## T R I N I D A D

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (1)

At the end of 1920, the Trinidad cocoa planters looked back over the last 50 years with an air of satisfaction and looked forward to an era of untold wealth, only to find their hopes shattered by a fall in prices in 1921. The factors contributing to this decline were several, but outstanding were, declining yields, the termination of indentured immigrants and their repatriation, mortgages and fragmentation of estates.

The discovery of Witches' Broom disease (*Marasmius Perniciosus*) in 1928 could be described in terms of the industry, as "flogging a dying horse." Here was cocoa at its lowest ebb, yet receiving another set back. By the end of 1928, 6,000 acres were infested, though 60,000 acres were suspected.

Agriculture is a business, and the aim of the agriculturist is to make a profit. When this becomes impossible, interest in agriculture ceases, and so it was with the cocoa industry. Thus field operations were neglected and even abandoned.

The following figures summarise the situation and give a clear picture of the alternating prosperity and depression of the industry, as well as the part it played in the economic structure of the colony.